

Testimony of "Marie"  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Judiciary Committee  
April 15, 2013

Good Afternoon.

I am here speak in support of Bill 6696, An Act Concerning Enhanced State Efforts to Prevent Human Trafficking.

This legislation is important to me personally because I am a victim of human trafficking. Yet, as a survivor of this crime I am still looked upon as a criminal by Connecticut's legal system.

Even though I was coerced by a pimp to live a life I did not choose, I was arrested for prostitution. That arrest stays with me every day of my life. Even though I continue to heal from the scars of slavery, my criminal record festers as a constant reminder of what was done to me.

I was able to escape from my pimp because of a very compassionate and astute Judge in Hartford who recognized my situation for what it was: modern day slavery. Since then I have cooperated with law enforcement, been identified by the FBI as a victim of human trafficking, written and spoken extensively about the abuse I suffered and testified before this committee one year ago as a victim.

Yet, my criminal record remains. Why am I -- a victim of a crime -- still labeled a criminal?

Why are all the victims like me still forced to carry this burden? Haven't we been through enough? No one knows what the men who buy us do to us, how they pay to use our bodies any way they like, how they humiliate and degrade our spirits, and how they shop for us on their computers like they were buying any other cheap gadget they need for their convenience.

On the streets my name was "Autumn" - or "Diamond" - if you like. I was whoever you wanted me to be. I was also called whore, hooker, ho, slut, prostitute . . .

Today, I know none of those names are true, except one, the worst one: criminal.

When I apply for a job, or a loan, or have to mention my past in any way to anyone, there it is. "Arrested for prostitution."

Today, I am asking you to set me free at last. This terrible, dark time of my life can be erased with the passage of this bill. Please allow me the future I deserve, one without the ghosts of my past.

Thank you.